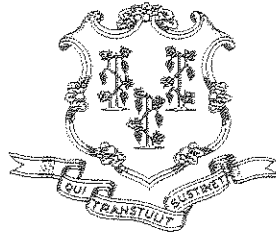


# MILFORD-ORANGE PROBATE COURT

District No. 40

BEVERLY K. STREIT-KEFALAS  
JUDGE

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70 West River Street  
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March 17, 2014

To the Judiciary Committee

RE: H.B. 5488 – AAC Health Insurance Coverage for Probate Court Personnel

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I am the President Judge of the Connecticut Probate Assembly – the organization of 54 probate judges in the state. I have been the judge of the Milford Probate Court since 1999 and thereafter in 2011 of the Milford-Orange Probate Court. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee to support passage of H.B. 5488 – An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Probate Court Personnel.

I am speaking this morning in support of passage not only personally but also on behalf of the 54 judges of the probate court system. My staff of 5 has also expressed their wholehearted support for passage. To all of us, the change in the coverage is an issue of equity and parity in workplace benefits.

Having been a probate judge for 15 years, I have experienced especially in the last 3 years, significant changes, improvements and frankly sacrifices by the probate court system. As many of you know, consolidation of the courts from 117 to 54 in 2011 has resulted in millions of dollars in savings to the system.

These savings were the direct result of the sacrifices and commitment to public service by the probate court judges and employees. In addition to the increased workload on each judge and court employee, the state of the economy has caused increases in the demands and needs of the public. Living on stretched dollars and not hiring lawyers, the public needs more hands on assistance by our staff than ever before. And the public gets that exemplary service.

In July 2013, a completely new set of rules and procedures was implemented for the courts as well. Ask any probate lawyer and she or he will tell you that just becoming familiar with the new forms is daunting, never mind learning all the new rules. And our staff and the judges have once again excelled at meeting these new challenges.



March 17, 2014

To the Judiciary Committee

RE: H.B. 5488 – AAC Health Insurance Coverage for Probate Court Personnel

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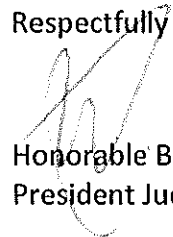
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When state employees underwent a wage freeze, the probate court employees did likewise. But throughout, health insurance premiums have remained a heavier burden on the probate system than on any other state employee. The employees were under a wage freeze for 5 years and only recently have begun to receive cost of living wage increases. There has been no freeze in the cost of insurance – in fact, continual increases have occurred. The net result for many has been in essence a decline in wages, at a time of increased work demands.

Voting for passage of H.B. 5488 will result in equitable treatment of all employees in state government.

Thank you for your time today and your attention to passage of this equitable bill.

Respectfully submitted,



Honorable Beverly K. Streit-Kefalas  
President Judge, Connecticut Probate Assembly

